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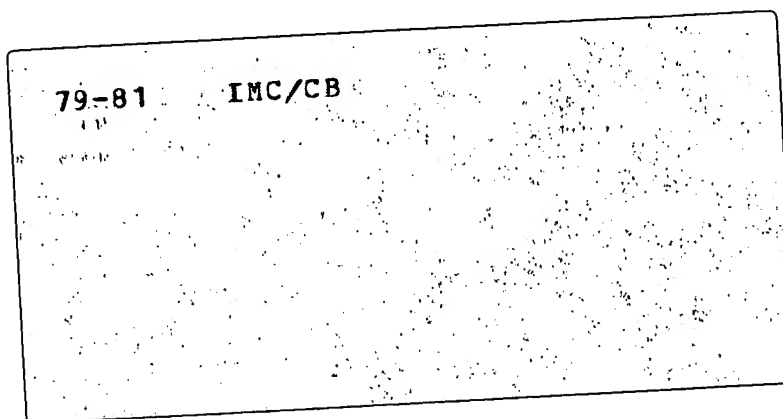
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## Afghanistan Situation Report

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18 June 1985



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18 June 1985

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## AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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Soviet special-purpose forces (Spetsnaz) in Afghanistan are trained for, and perform, different tasks than other Spetsnaz units.

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#### IN BRIEF

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#### AFGHANISTAN IN MAY

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The Soviets launched their spring offensive in May. The largest operation occurred in the Konar Valley. Soviet and Afghan troops, supported by large numbers of aircraft, relieved the besieged Afghan garrison at Barikowt (in early June) and disrupted insurgent resupply efforts.

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This document is prepared weekly by the Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis and the Office of Soviet Analysis. Questions or comments on the issues raised in the publication should be directed to

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**SOVIETS TAILOR SPETSNAZ UNITS FOR AFGHANISTAN**



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Soviet special-purpose forces (Spetsnaz) in Afghanistan perform different tasks than other Spetsnaz units. Instead of concentrating on reconnaissance and sabotage behind enemy lines--classic Spetsnaz missions--Spetsnaz units in Afghanistan are used primarily as elite ground unit combat troops.

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in Afghanistan Spetsnaz are used to interdict insurgent supply lines and support sweep operations conducted by regular ground troops and also conduct typical Spetsnaz missions such as extended patrols and ambushes.

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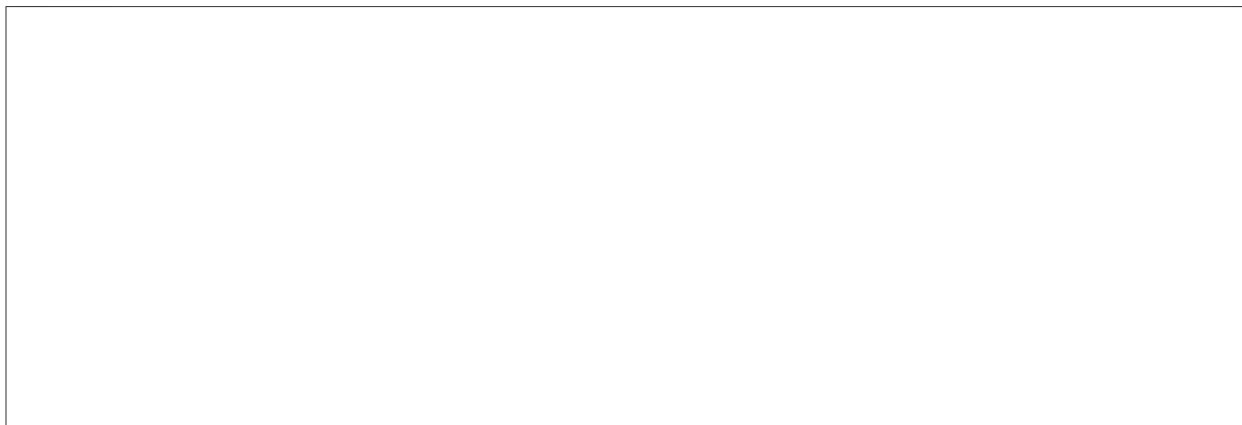
**Comment:** The Soviets clearly have found that the Afghan conflict requires both Spetsnaz and traditional ground combat skills. We believe the Soviets are manning the battalions in Afghanistan with conscripts specially trained for Afghan missions and that these troops may lack some capabilities, such as intelligence collection and sabotage, characteristic of Spetsnaz troops opposite NATO.

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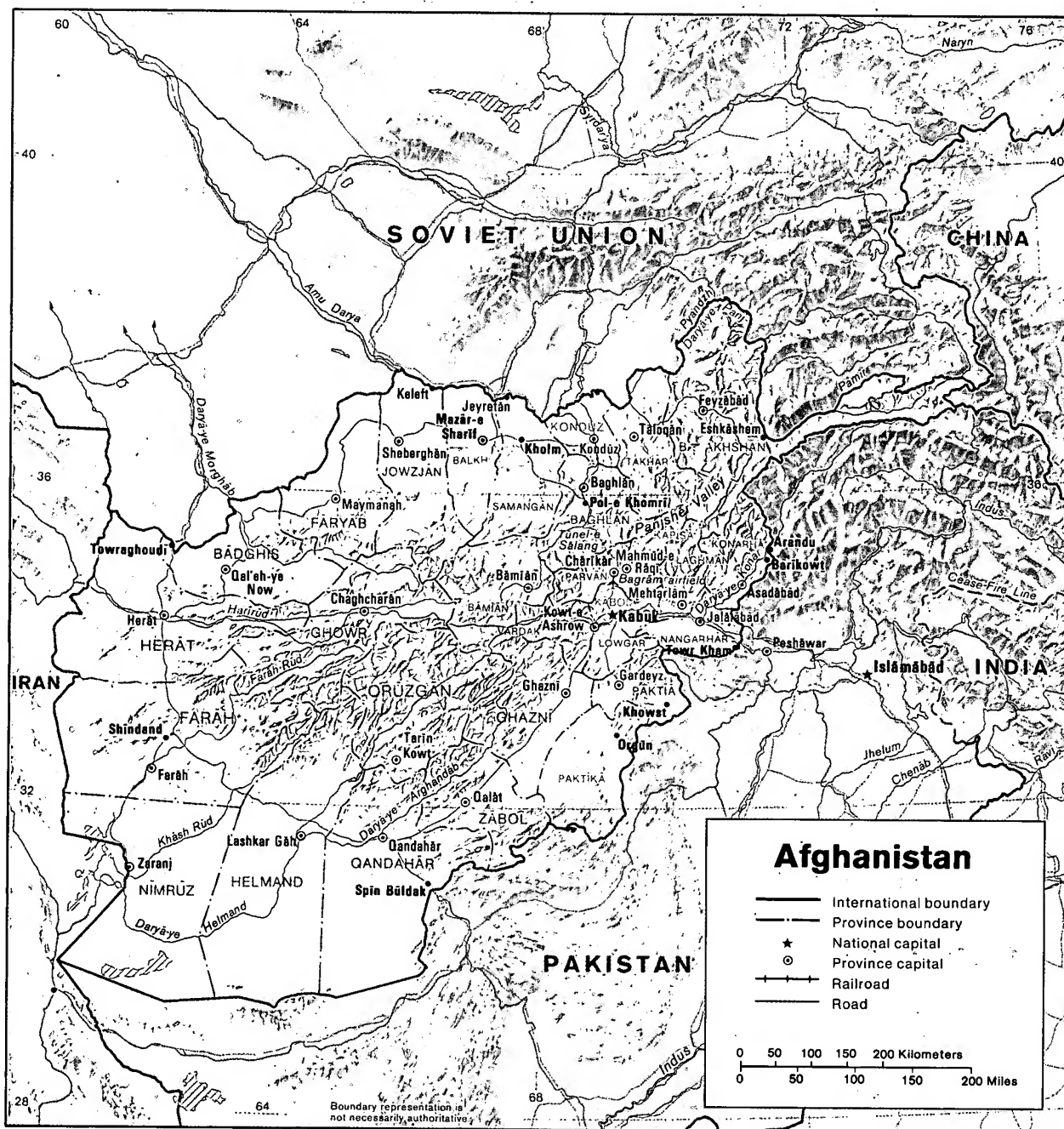


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**IN BRIEF**

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-- The Afghan Government plans to merge Bakhtar Airlines--the Afghan domestic airline--and Ariana Airlines--the international carrier--later this month, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The Afghan Government hopes both to improve the efficiency of the domestic airline--which reportedly lost almost \$200,000 last year--and increase government control over commercial air operations. [REDACTED]

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25X1 -- Pravda's Kabul correspondent [redacted] 25X1  
[redacted] had seen security improve in the capital  
but not elsewhere during the last two and one-half  
years. Travel outside Kabul was tense and required  
elaborate and burdensome logistical and security  
preparations, he said. [redacted] 25X1

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## PERSPECTIVE

AFGHANISTAN IN MAY  
by [ ] NESA

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The Soviets launched their spring offensive in May with simultaneous operations in the Konar River Valley near the Pakistani border; in Ghazni, Lowgar, and Paktia Provinces also in the east; and in several locations in the south, west, and north as well. The Konar campaign probably involved the largest number of heliborne troops and aircraft of any Soviet operation to date and succeeded, in early June, in opening a supply road to the Afghan Army garrison at Barikowt, which had been besieged by insurgents during the past year. The operation also probably disrupted insurgent resupply efforts temporarily. It resulted in relatively high casualties for both sides. The Konar area's rough terrain and its proximity to Pakistan provide advantages for the insurgents, however, and should enable them to resume their activities in the near term.

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The Konar Valley Campaign

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The Konar operation was the largest ground operation since the April 1984 Panjsher campaign.

[ ] Soviet and Afghan troops--most of them Soviet--supported by [ ]

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[ ] tanks, artillery, and multiple rocket launchers took part. [ ]

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[ ] nearly all Soviet aircraft in Afghanistan were involved. [ ]

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[ ] the Soviets reached Asmar by the end of May and that units conducted a major sweep in the adjacent Pich River Valley, which insurgents use as a supply route to the Panjsher Valley. [ ]

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most of an estimated 5,000 to 8,000 insurgents in the valley initially withdrew from the valley to avoid the intensive aerial bombardment. They subsequently returned to ambush convoys, raid small outposts, and fire rockets and mortars at the larger garrisons. Konar insurgents are better armed than any other insurgent groups because of their proximity to Pakistan.

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### Soviet Operations in Other Areas

The Soviets mounted smaller operations elsewhere in Afghanistan. Diplomatic sources indicate that the Soviets cleared the Kabul-to-Gardeyz road and attacked insurgent positions in Lowgar, Paktia, and Nangarhar Provinces. We believe the Soviets are continuing to emphasize operations in these provinces in order to block the infiltration of insurgents from Pakistan. The Soviets also expanded their presence in Ghazni City and conducted several heliborne assaults among the surrounding villages, according to diplomatic sources.

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the Soviet motorized rifle division at Shindand was involved in multibattalion operations in western Afghanistan from early to mid-May and that Soviet ground forces were active around Kholm in Samangan Province in northern Afghanistan.

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Cross-Border Airstrikes

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[redacted] aircraft from Afghanistan bombed Arandu on the Pakistani border, across from the Afghan Army garrison at Barikowt, three times and that a fourth attack occurred near on the border in Baluchistan. None of these attacks caused casualties. [redacted]

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An airstrike deeper inside Pakistani territory on 31 May, however, caused the largest number of casualties since January 1984. Eight aircraft killed 11 civilians and wounded 30 others near Drosh approximately 14 miles into Pakistani territory at the northern end of the Konar River Valley. [redacted]

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Insurgent Initiatives

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[redacted] Sources of the US Embassy in Kabul report that insurgents bombed Jalalabad airport in early May as tribal leaders returned from a meeting with regime officials. [redacted]

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The insurgents were active in Herat and Qandahar.

[redacted] insurgents set the governor's house on fire and harassed the Soviet and Afghan Army outposts that ring the city. [redacted]

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[redacted] the insurgents harassed Afghan Army outposts and stripped a tank given to them by Afghan Army defectors. [redacted]

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[redacted]  
Untested US Embassy sources say that one helicopter crashed near Feyzabad in Badakhshan, two others crashed near Kabul, and a MIG-17 was downed in Nangarhar Province. The sources do not know if these planes were shot down or crashed because of malfunctions. [redacted]

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### Outlook

We believe the Konar operation will disrupt temporarily insurgent resupply efforts and force the guerrillas to find alternative and perhaps less accessible infiltration routes. But the Soviets are likely to find long-term success difficult to secure. Even if the Soviets establish permanent garrisons between Asadabad and Barikowt, however, they will be vulnerable to insurgent harassment. The Konar's difficult terrain will also make Soviet resupply difficult. [redacted]

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The next phase of the Soviets' campaign may be a summer offensive against strategic areas in which the resistance is strong, such as the Panjsher Valley and Qandahar and Herat cities. Unless they add to their forces, Soviet large-scale operations against these areas would reduce significantly the forces available to block insurgent infiltration routes in the border areas. [redacted]

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